

Shooting star by Joe Sage

This is not the first Kia EV, but it's the first on their new global platform and first with a new EV-plus-number naming scheme.

Structurally and mechanically, EVs can all seem very similar, leaving it more to styling, interiors and user interfaces to distinguish among them. And to confirm their significance, the new Kia EV6 has just won an award for exactly those, crowned as one of ten *Ward's Auto 10 Best for Styling and User Experience*.

EVs tend to have a low center of gravity, with a heavy battery pack at floorpan level. The Kia EV6 emphasizes this with a stance much like a European shooting brake (a sexy body form we sadly generally lack in the US). They achieve this largely through optics—generous headroom is almost the same in the

second row as the front, with its sleek flow achieved by gracefully arcing the beltline up into an integrated D-pillar at the rear. Its road-hugging stance makes it look ready to carve mountain curves as easily as to tackle urban freeways and grocery duties.

And ready it is, as we confirmed on a run up the Apache Trail, involving exhilarating horseshoes and wild S-curves, along with notable cliffhanging climbs and descents—much in stormy weather—where it delivered a quick, precise road-hugging performance.

This mountain and canyon two-lane will sooner, later or always include some sizable boats in tow and such, making it a great place for one of our favorite EV features (when they have it)—one-pedal mode, which uses regen-

erative electromagnetic brake energy to provide continuous, instant response both to go and to slow, with just your right pedal. On the EV6, this is controlled by two switches on the steering wheel, left and right, sort of like paddle shifting, but the left one increases one-pedal by increments from zero to four levels, and the right one can decrease it similarly or simply release it back to automatic. The car is a bit large and heavy to count on one-pedal for full stops, but being ready to use the brake pedal is wise, anyway, in any EV with this.

Apache Trail doesn't take you all that far out of town or away from charging stations, though we started overall from a farther distance. Regardless, you need not have range anxiety—EV6 is strong on that (310 miles on our model) and relatively quick to recharge.

On the latter, in fact, Kia is proud to have

recently replaced Tesla in *Guinness World Records* as having the shortest cumulative charge time on a coast-to-coast run—seven hours, 10 minutes and one second. Granted this is more time than it takes to gas up an ICE machine, but when you throw in meals and leg-stretching while charging—activities you need, anyway—it's a pretty strong statistic.

There are five models—three trim levels, the base model with a smaller battery pack and rear-drive only, the upper two with more juice and offering dual-motor AWD, which makes five. These are the basis for power and range variables (see chart at lower right).

We drove a mid-level Wind with RWD, giving ours 225 hp (more than the base, tied with the top GT-Line, less than if it had AWD); 258 lb-ft of torque (same as all with RWD, while AWD raises it massively to 446); and 310 miles of range (tied with GT-Line RWD, while AWD drops this to 274, and the base model has 232 miles). It all adds up to zero-to-60 times of 8.0 seconds base or 7.2 for the upper two, besting those at 5.1 in the upper two with AWD.

Tough choice? Yes and no. Five prices run from the low \$40s to mid-50s. Ours was in the middle and a solid, even thrilling performer.

One of two big jumps is from Light to the upper two, which mostly boils down to having the base trim as a nice budget option.

The other big variable is AWD, which (as is

typical) boosts power and performance on the upper, but reduces range.

GT-Line is easier, boiling down to features.

AWD is an easy decision on ICE vehicles, but on EVs it gives that big boost to torque, a nice acceleration thrill in daily driving, useful for lane-change bursts, but that shorter range is a more notable concern than fuel mileage.

Though AWD fans, we never felt we needed it on Apache Trail in the rain, which is as sporty as it gets. And our charging options wouldn't have had us welcoming less range. If you travel north a lot, AWD with snow mode would be welcome, but charging and range considerations would be multiplied. The price differential is reasonable. Tough call.

That award-winning interior and user interface are handsome, but smallish AC vents and a black glass touchscreen, needed for most functions, were both notable in red hot Arizona summer. An oddity: main and binnacle screens include two outside temperature readings, always different by three to nine degrees in our experience, while a clock is not always present—seems a simple fix opportunity (but which thermometer do they keep?)

Our midlevel model proved its value and could easily be all you need. But it's great to have those other options both above and below. Give 'em each a try, and check your budget. You can't go wrong at any level. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| ASSEMBLY |Hwasung, South Korea |
| MOTOR |AC synchronous perm magnet |
| BATTERY |lithium ion polymer (LIPO) 697V, 111.2 Ah, energy 77.4 kWh, power 253 kW |
| BATTERY WEIGHT |1052 lb |
| CHARGING |on-board (OBC) 10.9 kW low-voltage DC-DC converter 1.8 kW |
| DRIVETRAIN |RWD |
| HP / kW / TORQUE |225 hp / 168 kW / 258 lb-ft |
| TRANSMISSION |gear reduction unit |
| FINAL GEAR RATIO |(constant) 10.65:1 |
| 0-TO-60 MPH |7.2 sec |
| MAXIMUM SPEED |115 mph |
| BRAKING DISTANCE |(62.1 to 0 mph) 147.6 ft |
| SUSPENSION |F: MacPherson type w inclined strut bearing + single lower arm type, selective damping control, hydraulic rebound stop; R: five multi-link, shocks w selective damping control |
| STEERING |rack & pinion, belt-type rack-mounted motor-driven |
| BRAKES |F: 12.8 vented; R: 12.8 solid |
| WHEELS |7.5Jx19 alloy / 235/55R19 |
| LENGTH / WHEELBASE |184.3 / 114.2 in |
| TURNING CIRCLE |38.2 ft |
| GROUND CLEARANCE |6.1 in |
| HEADROOM (F/R) |39.0 / 38.0 in |
| LEGROOM (F/R) |42.4 / 39.0 in |
| CARGO CAPACITY |24.4 / 50.2 cu.ft |
| WEIGHT |4299-4398 lb |
| TOW CAPACITY |(w brake) 2300 lb |
| CHARGING TIME |DC Fast 50 kW73 minDC Fast 350 kW18 minAC 240V7 hr 10 minAC 120V68 hrs |
| RANGE |310 miles |
| MPGe |134/101/117 (city/hwy/comb) |
| BASE PRICE | \$47,000 |
| PAINT: Glacier |495 |
| DESTINATION CHARGE |1215 |
| TOTAL | \$48,710 |

2022 KIA EV6 LINEUP

| | HP / kW / LB-FT | |
|---------|---------------------------|----------|
| Light | RWD 167 / 125 / 258 | \$40,900 |
| Wind | RWD 225 / 168 / 258 | ▼ 47,000 |
| | AWD 320 / 239 / 446 | 50,900 |
| GT-Line | RWD 225 / 168 / 258 | 51,200 |
| | AWD 320 / 239 / 446 | 55,900 |

